



PARNASSUS
SPRING '82

A faint, light gray watermark image of classical architecture is visible in the background. It features a series of fluted columns supporting a horizontal entablature, with a triangular pediment above. The image is out of focus and serves as a subtle background for the text.

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PARNASSUS

**LITERARY MAGAZINE OF
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Editors:

Edward Knowlton

Robert Getchell

Advisors:

Eleanor Hope-McCarthy

Bernard Horn

Special Thanks to:

Heidi Boone and Liz Augor

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A Lesson in Weight

by Kathleen Erickson

My childish nature and my love for food transcended any desire to be slim. I'd take a big bowl of mashed potatoes smothered with globs of butter over a stupid shirt any day. Any occasion that included food was sure to have me present. My favorite social event was one that included a huge buffet with a table crammed full of three different kinds of meat, stuffing **and** potatoes, French bread, Italian bread, and finger rolls, peas **and** corn, cranberry sauce and sweet pickles, and lots of butter and gravy to drown it all in. Of course there was also a completely separate table that held all the cherry and banana cream pies, peanut butter and tollhouse cookies, an assortment of candy and nut filled dishes, and platters of chocolate frosted cupcakes. When I went out with friends or family, I went out to eat.

Being in the prime of adolescent rebellion and as fat as I was, I continually ignored my mother's and doctor's countless requests for me to diet. Every spring at my annual physical, the routine was basically the same. The nurse would weigh me, measure me and take my pulse. About a half an hour later, the doctor would come in, sign my camp application and tell me how many pounds more I weighed this year than I did the year before.

I can remember sitting on the edge of the examining table with my eyes fixed on the patch of floor directly between my swaying feet as I tearfully listened to my degradation. I could sense my mother thinking, "See, you are fat; I'm not the only one who thinks so!" So, to try and please them both I'd listen to the plans:

"No more cookies on your shopping list mother. No more candy bars for you, Kathleen," and I'd leave the office with the updated versions of the twelve hundred calorie diet, the yes and no food list and the height and weight chart that I'd been given the year before.

On the way home my mother and I would stop at "Friendly's" for one last hot fudge sundae with lots of gooey marshmallow and sickeningly sweet chocolate syrup generously poured over four different kinds of ice cream. For nutrition's sake, (and because of a strong liking for but because it was restricted from the new diet), a large ripe banana would trim the symbolic creation. During this ritual we would discuss skim milk, ice milk, sit-ups and carrot sticks; however, my attention was never a hundred percent until the conversation led to all the fringe benefits that my success would bring me.

It was quite difficult for me to understand why all my attempts at reducing to a normal weight failed. I guess my first big mistake was what I perceived my rewards to be - a new wardrobe and final acceptance from my mother and loads of attention and approval from friends, teachers and un-un...boys! The best part about dieting was dreaming. I often imagined myself returning to school in the fall and having no one recognize me. I imagined people wondering who that 'pretty' new girl was and my cool nonchalant attitude towards their envy and admiration when they found out it was **ME**. A step in the right direction was looking at my condition as a health issue instead of a social issue.

Another of my misconceptions was **who** I was supposedly "suffering" for. My mother and I would get into terrible fights and I would eat something "illegal" to spite her, often trying to chew between sobs. Sometimes it was quite a challenge to see if I could, with my mother in the next room, open the bread box, take out a ring ding or a twinkie, or two, or three, sneak into the bathroom, run the water as I carefully and quietly tore the cellophane from my sin and eat it triumphantly. After an episode like this I knew I'd really gotten her but good!

I always told myself "You won't always be fat," most often I think when my mouth was full, my eyes were wet and my mother had shamed me somehow. I was great at assuring myself; in fact I did a wonderful job of it--all the way up to two hundred and twenty-five pounds. I never did lose weight successfully until my mother moved away. I guess I finally figured out the difference between dieting for someone else and dieting for yourself.

The Man Who Carried a Bag of Snow From Mt. Fuji

A man carried a bag of snow from Mt. Fuji,
And he carried his bag of snow on his back,
And as he walked on the bottom of the ocean
The sun melted the snow, and the bag
That he carried it in burst from its use.
And when the man who carried the bag

Of snow from Mt. Fuji came home,
His friends said to him,
Show us the bag of snow
That you have carried from Mt. Fuji.
But the man could not, because the bag
That he had carried it in had burst,

And the snow had melted and run down
His back, and even the bag had worn away
So completely that there was nothing left.
But his friends said to him,
Show us the bag of snow
That you have carried from Mt. Fuji.

So the man told his friends, how as
He walked on the bottom of the ocean,
The sun melted the snow, and the bag
That he carried it in had burst from its use.
And his friends were pleased with him,
And soon other people began to come and

Listen to the story of how the man
Had carried a bag of snow from Mt. Fuji.
And the man lived a long time
At home with his friends and
He told his story to all who wanted
To listen until he was very old.

And one day he said to his friends,
Now I am old and I am going away.
And his friends were concerned
For him and they said,
But where are you going? And
The man who had carried a bag of snow

From Mt. Fuji said to them, I am going back
To Mt. Fuji, and when I return
I shall bring you a bag of snow.

--Alan Habhab

"Guess Who" February 27, 1982

My first kiss.
My first kiss?
My first real kiss.
My first real kiss?
My first comfortable kiss.
My first guilt-free kiss.
The first kiss I experienced
without simultaneously thinking
it was given out of consideration
or obligation.

Eight hundred "Guess Who" fans
and two hundred others just there
for a good time—

and plenty to keep me busy.
With most of the customers content
there was but cleaning to do—
and roaming.

Beer cans and swizzle sticks lay
scattered on the floor
like helpless conquered foes,
and I,
well into my sixth hour of subservience
survey the wreck like a medic in a battlefield.

Roaming across the dance floor.

Roaming?
Weaving cross the dance floor,
through waving arms,
around swaying hips,
over bobbing heads,
under locked arms of couples with my tray
skillfully balanced and maneuvered
on the small rises of my hand.

And you
making your rounds; roaming—
towards me.

My heart skipping a beat
in the thought of the affectionate smile
I anticipated.

You reached for my head,
and with a firm hand
on each side
calmly and gently led it to yours.

Whatever message you had
for me
had to be spoken in my ear directly.
The battle
of the beer cans
and the thunderous music
was still in high heat;
but your message was unspoken
and—

(with a quiet smile in your eyes),

on my lips,
and
in my heart.
You didn't say anything—
You kissed me.
You kissed me.
In a steamy forest of hundreds of
 swaying, drunken bodies,
you kissed me
as if we were alone
in the dark of a warm and starry night.
And we were.
Then, just as instantly,
we both continued
roaming.
And I didn't
even
crawl under the nearest chair
like a child caught
putting penny chocolates in her pockets
in the dime store.
I tripped over it.
And I survived
my first,
real,
comfortable,
guilt-free
kiss.

--Kathleen Erickson

Country Living

by Marian Clay

We picked this spot in the country because we were running away from the hassle of city living. Country people were healthier, we thought. They seemed to have fewer problems than city people and they weren't too concerned about solving the few problems they did have. It just seemed as though there was no stress in country living. That was our aim, get rid of the stress in our everyday life.

Our move to the country got rid of the stress, all right. It also got rid of many acquaintances, some of our friends and part of our family. Even the bill collectors had a job finding us. We were so far out in the country we were lucky we kept our citizenship.

The farm was nice, calm, peaceful and hassle free. Time meant nothing. One day seemed to slide right into the next. The only way we knew it was Sunday was a fat newspaper and no mail.

Because every place in the country has a name we thought it only proper to name our farm. What better name for a farm like ours than FUNNY FARM, especially since we could grow anything you couldn't eat. Dogs, cats, houseplants and a beautiful "experimental" crop of marijuana. Actually it was three plants in a bucket. But the damn things loved the country air and they grew to five feet tall in no time. We would go to bed at night and dream they were marching into the bedroom pointing accusing fingers at us for doing something illegal. We figured we had better get rid of them before we were arrested. How do you get rid of something in the country? You bury it, right? --wrong-- we buried the marijuana, all three plants. Next spring we had thirty-three plants. We were in an isolated area of the White Mountains miles from real civilization. Why should we worry? Who's going to see our strange plants? We were smart enough to bury them in the woods. Pretty safe, we thought. We had no intention of selling any of it, all we wanted to do was get rid of it. Everytime we cut one down two came up in it's place. Here we were with a bumper crop and trying desperately to dispose of it. No one bothered to tell us that in our area the sheriff patrolled in an airplane. When we found this out we knew our plants really had to go--and quickly! We tried burying them, we tried cutting them down, neither worked. We couldn't burn them out or the whole mountain would have gone up in smoke. We had one more alternative. Animals eat plants. We would get some animals.

The farmer up the road had eight pigs. Four pigs too many for the area he had to keep them. We graciously granted him permission to put a wire enclosure around a big area that we had available and let his pigs eat up a storm. We figured our problem was solved for sure. --Wrong again! Oh, the pigs ate the marijuana all right and it made them the happiest pigs in the entire state. But it also gave them a wicked case of the munchies and they went right through the wire enclosure and ate their way through the farmer's whole vegetable garden before we could get them confined in his barn. He couldn't understand their behavior and we certainly weren't going to explain it. After all, it did solve our marijuana problem. By the way, did you ever see a pig smile?



Intrusions

by Kathy Ducharme

As I sit here alone on the wharf in the harbor, in this quiet and subdued world, I hear the sound of the water gently lapping the pylons below, which rise up out of the water like giant monoliths. I look down; the water appears cold, ominous, and devoid of life. Seaweed hugs the pylons that are in its path. The sounds and smells of the sea permeate the air: the distant fog horn, the mournful cries of gulls, the fog rolling in.

My attention is drawn toward the open sea by the familiar sound of a lobster boat; it is interrupted by the sight of a forest of masts. A multitude of sailboats are moored at the docks below. The gentle movement of the tide causes them to rock slightly, and along with this rocking motion, comes the cacophony of the halyards against the aluminum masts.

The clinking and clanging of the halyards is drowned out by the approaching lobster boat. My attention, again, is directed to sea. A thousand seagulls engulf the stern. They are impatiently waiting for the lobsterman to discard his unused bait, whose odor they persistently followed all the way in to the harbor.

The boat stopped abruptly beside a yellow and red striped lobster buoy. The obsolescent boat groaned and creaked, resisting again the strain of the bent pully as it retrieved the cumbersome trap from the bottom. It had weathered so many years of service; the attempted paint job was peeling; the side was shaped like a bow from the traps continuously being dragged over it.

The lobsterman was old and weathered too. He was wearing a yellow sou'wester and heavy working gloves. The face above the greyish-white beard was so wrinkled and lined it looked like a dried apple doll. He went mechanically about his work, oblivious to everything except accomplishing his task. As he baited and lowered the trap he headed for his next yellow and red striped buoy. He hadn't yet discarded any garbage, and the gulls were reluctant to leave, still anticipating a great feast of dead fish.

He was gone, and with him the intrusion of the engine and the gulls. Once again I could hear the kissing of the water against the pylons, and the clinking and clanging of the halyards. I sit here on this grey, chilly afternoon, with the fog getting thicker. The breeze that was once so slight, is now a raw, bone-chilling wind.



An Act of Outrage

by Vito Napolitano

My first efforts to play the trumpet had been frustrating, producing only the sounds similar to that of a steam radiator hissing and whistling its way to the peak of its heat, or noises that could easily be interpreted as the slow passing of fingernails over a chalk board. I knew that hours of dedicated, time-consuming practice, were required to master this shiny, gold-colored brass instrument, with such a strange sound.

The countless numbers of hours practicing had begun, and as time went on the work gradually was beginning to produce its dividends. The once hissing sound of the radiator had become the smooth even sound of a fast-moving river, and the one-time squeal of the chalkboard had vanished like the stars at dawn. I knew how forceful it wanted to be played, and it, in turn, knew how to repay me with the soft steady sound it produced.

I had reached the eighth grade, and already had had a three year semi-intimate relationship with the horn. With my command at just a touch of the finger, the finely oiled valves would slip up and down in their cylinder, like the pistons of an automobile firing steady in place. Each combination of valves would produce its own unique sound that had its own purpose. I was fascinated by the instrument.

My efforts had not gone unnoticed however, and with the hours of practice behind me now, I was awarded first seat, first trumpet in the school band. It was a position to be proud of at that young age in life and no one could be prouder than I. The playing of the more difficult and better arrayed pieces of music was mine, the solos were mine, and the respect from some twenty other trumpet players was mine. What else could a young boy of fourteen ask for!

Rehearsals for the major spring concert almost always had the same pattern; we would meet on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from two till five with a fifteen minute break somewhere in the middle. People were chattering endlessly while assembling instruments, or the construction of a concert style stage was going on with chairs and stands so that loud noises were the first sounds to fill the air. The noise level would just steadily continue to rise until it was almost at an unbearable point, and just then Mr. Kimball, our band director, would enter the room, as if he had been waiting for just that moment. In long strides like a panther springing on his prey, he would take this direct non-stop trot to the podium. Holding his long white stick that he used for cueing in his right hand and anxiously tapping it in the palm of his left was his usual ritual. With a deep tone that sounded much like a big bass tuba he would call us to our seats.

"All right people, lets take our seats, open our folders and take out the national anthem," all in one breath. That was all we would have to hear and like homing pigeons circling in for a landing we would flock to our seats.

The rustling of music papers and the last minute adjustments of chairs and stands filled the air for just a moment. Finally, thinking that we had had enough time, Mr. Kimball would, with one quick, sharp motion, raise his hands and head from the music that he was patiently thumbing through. Our instruments would go up and, seconds later, the first blast of the national anthem would be heard in the entire room.

During our ten-week rehearsal of preparation for the spring concert, I was always being called upon to help demonstrate that particular sound the instructor was looking for, or to help build up a weaker, less powerful section of the music to help it move along. At one point I personally had helped tutor a fellow trumpet player named Dave Mattelli. He was a big guy physically, but mentally he wasn't too sharp; in fact, he was as dull as a butter knife that had been beaten against a rock. Nevertheless we played trumpet together and as concert time rolled around, our sound had grown more powerful and confident than it had ever been before. I was proud to be playing first seat, with my friend and sidekick, Dave, right next to me in second seat.

It was concert week and rehearsal was normal with one exception. On Wednesday we were informed that a special practice session would be held on Thursday, in preparation for opening night which was Friday.

"Everyone had best show up for rehearsal on Thursday--or else," we were informed in a harsh, cold tone. Everyone did show up for rehearsal on Thursday, everyone but me, that is, and for no real reason. I just didn't feel like going.

Opening night came around and everyone arrived in the bandroom at six o'clock sharp. People were nervously running around, checking their coats and ties to make sure that every part of the uniform was in place. A few people had asked me with busy body intentions where I was the night before and at the same time took the opportunity to inform me that Mr. Kimball was not at all pleased.

Stepping out of his office, Mr. Kimball glanced around and suddenly his voice could be heard. "First and second trumpet come to my office please." Dave and I just looked at each other in a long question mark stare as we headed to his office from separate parts of the room. Once inside with the door closed, the conductor looked up from his desk and spoke. "Dave, when we go out there tonight you will be playing first seat." As I heard those words, with the combination of Dave's snickering, my mouth dropped open. In a voice of astonishment, I demanded to know what the meaning of this outrage was. "Next time you'll be able to make rehearsals like everyone else," was his only answer.

It was concert time now and we had entered and taken our seats on stage from the back, with the curtains still closed. Dave gave a hidden laugh as he planted himself in the seat that I had occupied for so long, and it slowly tore my emotions up inside. Mr. Kimball came on, gave his last minute instructions and the curtains were opened to begin a night of music.

Several songs passed and I just couldn't bring myself to play this music in front of me anymore. My mind just could not deal with the thought of being betrayed. I turned to my left with the accuracy of a sharpshooter. I will never forget that surprised look of disbelief on Dave's face, as he bounced on each of the three stairs that led down the stage and onto the floor. Our director's eyes were now wide open and cutting through me like a sharp knife cutting into a piece of cheese. That was all I needed to see to realize my band days had neared an end.

When the curtain closed it marked the end of a musical performance and also the end of my playing days. I was kicked out of the band for a full year and although I had played on my own for a few months after that, something in my tone was lost.

Once allowed back into the band, I could never seem to reach that first seat again.

No hand of man
could plant by plan
the symmetry of
a random scattering
of daisies.

--Helen Wolfe Allen

Childhood Revisited

by Theresa Charron

The life of a child is often portrayed as innocent and uncomplicated. Our adult society has a tendency to forget what it was like as a child. Do you remember your childhood? Was it as carefree as adults tend to remember it? James Agee in **A Death in the Family** draws childhood's realities out of our subconsciouses. He doesn't present childhood as a carefree loving bubble, but rather as a confusing misunderstood world with real cares and responsibilities.

The sense of self-value develops during the early years of life. Usually there is one special person in a child's life who helps cultivate this sense, one special somebody that the child can look up to, internalize values from, and feel all important in that person's world. The child needs to know that he is valued as a **person**, not as just another kid. This special someone for Rufus was his father, Jay. One of the necessary elements in such a relationship is TIME. This Jay did not spare with Rufus. Jay and Rufus took nightly walks which were looked forward to and enjoyed by each. Rufus realized that his father needed a few minutes away from home to relax, to increase his sense of well-being. But more important, Rufus realized "that his own, Rufus' own presence, was fully as indispensable to this well-being." This feeling of being indispensable increased Rufus' self-value and created a special relationship between Rufus and his father.

Indispensability. How important it makes a child feel. "What did he say?" "I don't know. I can't understand him." "Peter, say it again." "I still can't figure it out!" "Tell Theresa, Peter. She'll be able to understand you and tell us what you want." Responsibility. Official interpreter of Federal Street. Of a younger brother. A two year old from a different world. They need me. The world of Federal Street needs me. Peter needs me. I'd better stay with him all the time. No one out there can understand him! I really don't see why not. Maybe something happens to your hearing when you grow up. Better not grow up! Don't worry little brother, I'll take care of you! Everyone is looking at me. What did you say, Peter? He wants more milk.

Walks introduce a child to the world. The child is out in an extended world with no walls or gates or familiar surroundings. Everything is new, fascinating. But there is always that special place that holds a special meaning to the child. For Rufus, it was the rock. Not just any rock. But the big one in the vacant lot which he and his father sat on every night. It was theirs as that time of night was theirs. There was no question in their minds as they walked and "...then, without speaking, stepped into the dark lot and sat down on the rock..." It was this part of the walk that Rufus enjoyed the most; for even if there were no words exchanged, there was still communication.

"Where shall we go today?" Grandma was teasing again. She knew where we always went. The bridge that crosses the street. "It's a fast street. The cars go so very fast and there are so many that we would never be able to cross the street safely," Grandma explained one day. **Maybe** that's why they built it. But I think it was so we'd have something different to do when we walk. Everyone takes walks and everyone crosses streets. But **not** everyone has to climb a bridge to cross the street. Just us when we take walks. Maybe some day we will move to this street and I can cross this bridge **every** day to go to school! The stairs are see-through. 1...2...3...20--that's more than are in my house! It's like we're in an airplane, high above the cars. You cars can't get us. I can laugh at you from way up here. We're more important than you, **NOW!** Men built this bridge just for us. A people bridge.

These are the experiences that help a child grow and mature. These are also the ones that society dwells on: the carefree, fascinating world. But what of the other half of the world: the confusing, misunderstood half? Agee brings it to light by living common childhood experiences through Rufus and Catherine.

Catherine, at four, still has "accidents." These are embarrassing, demeaning. Everyone reminds her that she does this, that she is imperfect, not ready for the adult world yet. Even Rufus chides her, although Catherine doesn't let him get away with it. Instead she reminds

him that he, too, wets his pants. "Take off your nightie," he said. "Sopping wet," he added, as nearly like his mother as possible. "You're sopping wet, too," she retorted. "No, I didn't either," he said, "not last night." So Rufus hasn't left that part of baby life behind yet either. Unfortunately, that is the way it is perceived: wetting your pants is for babies. It is as if it is the last "baby thing" to go. If you can stop wetting your pants, you can step into the semi-adult state: you will survive. Until you reach this point, you are in a nether world, lost inbetween stages and no one can help you but you. It is as though Catherine views the world using accidents as the measuring rod and everyone else views Catherine using the same rod. Everything seems to point to the word or the actual event. When Aunt Hannah tells the children that their father had an accident, Catherine looks at "her aunt with astonishment and disbelief that she could say such a thing about her father." Accidents were reserved for children **not** fathers. Rufus uses the measuring rod during Father Jackson's visit. Father Jackson sat frowning at them, looking very displeased. The children "looked back, wondering what he was displeased about. Was Catherine wetting her panties, Rufus wondered;..." Rufus was disgusted to think that she might do something like THAT in front of the priest. Yet Rufus had found out many years before that adults also have accidents. After Rufus hugged his great-great grandmother, she wouldn't let him go.

...when at length they gently disengaged her hands, and he was at a little distance, he could see that there was water crawling along the dust from under her chair, and his father and his Aunt Sadie looked gentle and sad and dignified, ...and nobody said anything about it.

Adults make a big thing of a child wetting his pants, when really it is part of childhood, but when adults do the same, everyone looks the other way.

It is interesting that Rufus tends to adopt the adult view of pant-wetting towards his little sister, considering he hasn't grown out of it himself. Older siblings are like that: they possess **vast** stores of knowledge and have **so** many varied experiences that their younger sibling appears to be a dunce or a jerk. Have they really forgotten what childhood was like or have they been pushed so quickly into the adult mold that they don't want to acknowledge childhood?

"P--U! Did you wet your bed again?" (Leave me alone, A.M.! Just because you're my big sister doesn't mean you never wet your bed. And it doesn't smell that bad. You should be used to it anyway.) "You must have: you're at the very bottom of the bed. See, I told ya, it's all wet!" (As if I didn't know.) "When are you going to stop doing **that**? You'll probably pee your bed when you get married." I feel so stupid. But I can't help it. Do they think I do this on purpose? Do they think I enjoy doing this to get that, 'oh, not again!' look from everyone? It's something that happens to kids. Why can't they just remember that and accept it? I'll stop someday before I get married. No one wets their bed when they get married. But maybe there's something wrong with me. What happens if I don't--I won't be able to get married! No! She's just trying to scare me! That's what all big sisters do. Betty teases Kathy on **Father Knows Best** all the time. A.M. better not tell the kids at school. Someday I'll stop. I'll show her. Someday I'll be like the big people. Then I'll get married.

Birth and death are the two most confusing issues to children. In the early 1900's when Rufus grew up and in the 50's when I grew up, sex was not discussed as openly as it is now. Children were not told the biological facts of birth but rather oblique tales and explanations that left much to the imagination. When Rufus was four, his mother was pregnant with Catherine. Rufus knew something was different about her but he couldn't figure out just what exactly. Finally his mother told him that he "was to have a very wonderful surprise." That was the extent of the explanation until Mary found Rufus searching the house for hidden presents. Mary then told him that the surprise wasn't hidden, it wasn't there yet, it was in Heaven. Although this did not satisfy Rufus, he felt that he should not ask any more questions. Even if he had asked, he felt that no one would give him a straight answer.

"Where do babies come from, Mama?" "Heaven," she said, "God makes them." "Well, how does He get them here?" "He puts them in a mother's belly and they grow there." "How do they come out?" "Through a special opening." "What's opening?" "A door." "Oh." God makes babies. He makes everything. But why can't He just put them in their house? Why do they have to grow? And how can they grow in a mommy's belly? It must be like a watermelon seed. I swallowed one last summer. Maybe I'll grow a baby. No, it has to be a mommy. Maybe the Mommy swallows the baby after God give it to her. That's why it has to grow. It has to be small enough for her to swallow. It comes out a door. Where is that? I don't remember a special door. Maybe I don't have one yet; I'm not a Mommy. But where can it be? I know: the belly button! The baby grows in the Mommy's belly, so it must come out through her belly button! But mine is closed up. I can't open it. Maybe when the baby grows up, it opens it from the inside!

Death remains the ultimate mystery. Everyone eventually figures out where babies come from but death is never figured out. We don't know what death exactly is until we experience it first hand. This is a confusing issue to adults but more so to children. Children look to adults for explanations. Adults are supposed to know everything. But with the death of a family member, these adults suddenly are at a loss for words. They can't explain exactly what has happened. This confuses the child all the more. Now the world is full of contradictions: He looks like he is asleep but he really isn't; he won't be with you in your house but he will be with you all the time. All of this confused and scared Catherine. "Something very wrong was being done, and nobody seemed to care or to tell her what or to help her or love her or protect her from it..." She felt alone, hurt, unloved, and betrayed, and no one was there to love her. Most important: where was Daddy? "He's dead," Rufus decided. "He died last night...He has been dead all night while I was asleep and now it is morning and I am awake but he is still dead and he will stay right on being dead all afternoon and all night and all tomorrow..." Rufus felt he understood what had happened. His father was dead, period. He will never come home again. What more was there to understand? Rufus eventually concluded that it was all right for his father to be in a dark grave all alone. But the finality of the loss was not comprehended by the six year old. Instead he felt "gravely exhilarated." Rufus wanted to go to school, to see his teacher and friends. He felt that a privilege had been bestowed upon him.

He could now see vividly how they would all look up when he came into the school and how the teacher would say something nice about his father and about him, and he knew that on this day everyone would treat him well, and even look up to him, for something had happened to him today which had not happened to any other boy in school, any other boy in town.

It is difficult for a child to comprehend 'never again.' Tomorrow seems like forever, but never again? What can a child compare it to in his world?

I was six the day my mother told me my father had died. "God took him home to Heaven. We won't see him anymore but he still loves us. You can still talk to him cause he can hear you, just like God can." I felt the same exhilarating feeling that Rufus had felt: something had happened to me that had not happened to any of my friends in kindergarten. "My father's dead." "How did he die?" "When?" "Who told you?" The whole class is looking at me as I stand at the teacher's desk. "My mother told me. The radio told her. A radio like this one." A small black radio sat on the window sill by the desk. The antenna pointed at an angle to the ceiling as if it were ready to announce some news. "The man on the radio said the submarine went down too far and it couldn't come back up. Something went wrong with how it worked and the men couldn't fix it." I spoke with authority as though at six I knew all the scientific details of the surfacing mechanism of a sub. "It couldn't come back up if it wanted to. It was broken. And all of the water in the ocean made it flat like a pancake." A few days later we all went to church. A lot of people were there and all of our family, even though it wasn't Christmas. There was a long box in the middle of the aisle with a black cloth

over it. "That is supposed to be the coffin, the box Daddy would be in if he were here," someone explained. Why would Daddy be in a box? Where is he? And when he comes, why would he want to be in a box in the middle of the aisle? I tried to look under it to see if Daddy was hiding. But the cloth went all the way down to the floor. So I sat and watched the box and waited to see if Daddy would jump out until it was time to go.

Childhood is a confusing time. It is never a fascinating world with no cares. We all have pleasant memories of our childhoods. But there are also those times when we just **couldn't** figure things out. Agee does a magnificent job revisiting childhood through Rufus and Catherine. Through them, we can understand our experiences a little bit better.

*(Various quoted references in this story are taken from James Agee's Book **A Death in the Family**, Bantam Books, New York, N.Y., 1969.)*

Courtship

Like a dance

or a play

the way

each move is planned.

A game of chess.

Players outmove each other.

Friend or lover,

sister or brother.

Who bought the tickets?

Does anyone watch?

Circling---advancing---sidesteps.

EN GARDE!

'Pas de Deux'

choreographed

scripted

before the sun was new.

--M. R. Hodgdon

Sunday Morning

A moment ago

Asleep.

Now, I see glittering dust

Floating on a golden sunbeam

That sneaked through

The small opening

Between the shade and the window.

Muted voices come under the door.

I can't make them out and I don't want to.

They do not belong to me.

The birds sing joyfully outside

And I,

With a lullaby of morning frying bacon,

Sing joyfully inside

As I roll over again

To sleep.

--Donna Greene



Past Life Experience

by Diane M. Elko

How awkward, how odd to be sitting here at my desk, writing letters home to people I can visualize 8,000 miles away, but to me, they are only in the next room of my mind.

Oh, but it seems so real. Aunt Francoise, with a tight knot of strawberry blonde hair atop her head, so diligently stirring a steaming pot of sauce. Aunt Francoise's lissome figure had now rounded out with age into generous and gentle curves. Her smooth and roseate cheeks seemed to deny this progression in aging. "Now my Belle Chi-Chi, you have to put in more cheese, oregano, and a little more tomato." Ah, yes, along with the words were the outstretched fingers of my uncle Freddy to give his "Belle Chi-Chi" a pinch on the cheeks. Freddy was an ardent Italian cook as well as a former mounted state policeman in Northern Italy. His towering presence, black hair clipped neatly in place, the maestro's movements of a baton-like wooden spoon, designated his Northern Italian heritage. His strong and vibrant personality dictated the direction and progression of this culinary delight to be placed before this eager gathering. Though we ate to hearts content of his masterpiece, it was a peculiar sight to see this suave and debonair European gentleman sitting down to partake of a delmonico steak and a tossed green salad. One would think pasta would have been his life's staple, but, alas, for Freddy, no steak, no meal. For Freddy, no meal was ever served without a special glass of chianti to the right of his meal. With glasses clinking to "Salute" and "A votre sante," we busily scraped fork against porcelain to devour this Italian masterpiece.

As Freddy shared with us his customs, we shared with him our traditional cognac aperitif. From hand to hand, this aromatic bottle of aged champagne was passed along for all to add in dashes to their rich and freshly brewed coffee. What could be better than the tinkle and musical hum of voices blending in to drink this ambrosia and to treat their palates to a tarte de fraise creme.

The time arrived to scuffle our chairs away from the banquet table and hurriedly stack the china high. Already the little rotund bodies pressed close to the countertops, as squeaky sounds of soapy water washed away the traces of delectables so vastly enjoyed.

The men retreated "au salle en avant" to partake of further drink and conversation. A whitetopped head could be seen sitting in a corner arm chair, vacillating back and forth with fingers and hands jabbing the air. The excitement and bantering was crackling in the atmosphere. Uncle Armand and Dad, with his grey crewcut and ears that perked away from his head, led the conversation into forbidden topics. "If we didn't have Roosevelt for a President, we wouldn't have all these crooked politicians and all these problems with everyone being on welfare." "All the Kennedys are no good, they don't know what they are doing." From his corner, my father moved into this verbal ring. "But the Kennedys are a good Catholic family and they are truly for the people." Back and forth, back and forth, fly their words with not much headway in this argument.

Like a radio, the volume and pitch had increased greatly. The noise level in the kitchen was in great competition with the political debate in the "salle en avant," as to who could clarify his position. "A voie haute," snatches of French and English combined, made you wonder if it was Aunt Marielle who could cook better than Franklin D. Roosevelt, or better yet, Richard Nixon who had found a new dress for ten dollars. But as the din becomes louder, all the children, closely observed the phenomenon of Uncle Armand's eyes crossing behind his glasses. This never failed to amuse the adults and terrify the children, as we heard the heated argument progress. No one dared to laugh; otherwise, would his eyes forget to uncross?

The ladies, having completed their kitchen chores, extended to all an invitation to pull out the card tables. They challenged all to games of 45's or even yet "Tuck," a game of aggressive force that set each player against one and all to gain the center of the board. Everyone's aim was to knock all opponents off the board.

If you think the noise level decreased, you are mistaken. The crowd had enlarged with living room group and kitchen helpers joining together. Their voices blended into many pitches, almost like a symphony tuning up to play Beethoven. You would think that the Bayer Aspirin Company could make a fortune with this boisterous gang!

I feel I can raise my voice and put in my two cents worth. To do so I would only need to go up one or two octaves.

"You are wrong!" poised on the tip of my tongue, and a ping resounded in my head. To my right, I noticed my pen had slipped out of my clasp and landed at my slippered feet. This was Clark Air Force Base Officer's Quarters, 8,000 miles away from Lawrence, Massachusetts. Wasn't it terrific? I was home again in my reverie.



CREATION

A new child is born on the Astro sign of Virgo.
Small and frail the seed has grown,
With errors we cannot see;
Yet an inner spirit shines so bright,
To push the body onward,
To dawn and day and night.

With eyes so pure and new
To envision an earthly haven;
Out of void came life,
Confusing but unafraid,
To face the future in parade;
Love, fear, and trepidation; knowledge, wonder,
and delight.

To capture all the love that is offered,
And then some;
To wallow in all the tears,
And then some;
To hide from all the fears,
And then some;
To face the wonder with alarm and then some.

On fertile soil the seed has grown,
Bending with the wind.
Windowed eyes drink in the sights and sounds
And filter them from within.
Oh! vast and glorious world,
I join you in the swim.

The body weak, the spirit high,
The age of reason comes;
To shift the evil from the good,
To clean and polish and shine;
I live for someone's pleasure, I know,
But I dare not ask why.

The first blow comes;
I feign and parry.
My will is strong; I can go on;
Like clouds of fleece,
My faith will carry
Me on and on and on.

The second blow is stronger yet,
How longer can I go
On thinking it is right and reason,
Things I do not know.
Surely I am reaping now,
Things I have not sown.

The next blow cuts away my flesh,
The pain just grows and grows.
I pray that God will give me strength
To do my duties bold;
For I am growing old.

Before you turn the wheel again,
Please, Lord, let me heal
The wounds that scatter all about
From lovers, friends, and foes.
But, most of all,
From enemies unknown.

My faith is wavering, my Lord,
The questions come and go.
The misery that surrounds me,
For reasons I do not know.
My spirit waits for a sign;
Surely faith will show.

With knuckles bare, I knock and knock
On the door I've been told,
Will hold the secret of my faith;
Will unfold as it slowly opens,
The reason of my being;
The pain that I am seeing.

Still another blow befalls me;
I arch my back in pain.
The questions come a little slower;
I no longer play the game.
If this be survival of the fittest,
Surely I am lost, for I am lame.

My lips no longer form the words
Of hope and love and reason.
The days grow shorter as I toil;
For my body I am feeding,
To keep my mind alert and growing;
To watch the seeds I'm sowing.

Surely they'll grow without the pain;
Surely they'll see no sorrow.
For what is right is bright and clear,
For faith I only borrowed
To ease my aching heart that knows
To wait yet, for another blow.

A Reign of Terror

by Leila Dahne

April 18, 1975...

It was seven o'clock in the evening. You could see the beautiful sun set on the Mediterranean. As spring was here, everybody was out enjoying the freshness of the air.

I was on my way home from a long walk with some of my friends. When I had almost reached the big gate of our house, terrible sounds of shooting from everywhere scared me to death and almost paralyzed me. I could hardly make it into my house. Everyone was running to get inside with great looks of fear on their faces. Nobody knew what to do except to escape and hide somewhere inside the house. The screaming of my little nephew and niece was terrible. In a very short while, everyone occupied a corner of the corridor that separates the bedrooms in our house. Fifteen people lived in that narrow part of the house for days and days...All we did was wait with big opened eyes and great fear of what might develop during that night.

It was eight o'clock at night. Darkness prevailed in the whole city and nothing but sounds of a battle could be heard. When it calmed down for a couple minutes, sighing and groaning was all you heard from the outside.

This is some of what happened every day and night during that hot battle that lasted for forty days. It marked the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War, a conflict that proved successful in sowing and cultivating hatred and division in the hearts of people of the same nation: Moslems against Christians. And what was the cause? It was selfishness, mere selfishness.

I can say we had some measure of calm and peace in our local city, but others were experiencing fear, hunger, and death every day. A passerby was shot to death by a sniper. A mother and her two children slaughtered by one terrorist, simply because their house happened to be in the territory of the enemy party. Mass torturing and killing happened in one village after another, with no one spared. News of terror and fear prevailed everywhere. Many preferred to die of hunger rather than being caught by the bullet of a sniper on the street while searching to buy food. My grandmother used to relate to me the hardships, tribulations and sufferings they went through during World Wars I and II. But this war surpassed any other war in its cruelty and degree of inhumanity. It was a conflict that transformed a "once Paris of the Orient into a devastated landscape where the normal rules of civilization no longer apply." That was how one reporter put it.

Although we had neither electricity nor water for a long time, we managed to survive. We saw the need to depend on each other, more than ever before, in our relations inside and outside our house. Since all food stores were shut down at the time, my father's grocery store was a relief, not only to us but to all the neighborhood.

My father has many memories from previous wars that Lebanon has undergone. But this present war was a different kind of war. It was Lebanese themselves fighting each other for political and religious causes.

Being neutral in such a situation, proved to be the wisest choice. That proved to be true especially when members of my own household were kidnapped - my father, brother, and brother-in-law. It was April 22. The hour was approaching 11 P.M. By that time, we were all in our beds. Suddenly, a banging on the door made us all jump and run to the main living room to see what was happening. My father was the one to communicate with the people outside the door...six terrorists equipped with machine guns like I had never seen before.

We were obliged to open the door immediately, since they threatened to shoot and get in by force. No time for negotiation. Every male in that house was to leave with them. But they settled after for my father and brother and brother-in-law. I still remember my sister crying to see her husband going... maybe never to return alive. My mother couldn't stand up anymore on her feet. My younger brothers were looking at each other not knowing what to do.

Everything was dark. We couldn't move knowing that we were watched by someone on the outside. All we did was pray to God.

Forty-five minutes later, we heard two cars stopping outside of the house. I could hear, once again, my father's voice. What a relief that was, to see the three of them back safe and untouched. After welcoming them with a lot of tears, we came to know that a false accusation was the reason behind all this. The gathering of the family every Tuesday night to study the Bible, was thought to be a political meeting. Had we had a meeting of a political nature, the three of them would be dead by now. But thanks to God, neutrality was a protection to us, especially when news filled the cities about those killed after being kidnapped, for political involvement.

It's 1982. The civil war has never really ended; instead, it has become a sort of institution, a basic and accepted fact of life in Lebanon.

For most people, the day to day struggle, however, is no more for political or religious causes, but simply to survive. It seems people have adapted to the daily example of how easily a society can slip the links with civilization and return to a state of primitive barbarism. What is the outcome? What is the future going to be like? No one can answer these questions. I'd like to hope that, someday, peace will return to that land, yes, my land.

The Family

 Mom could you pass the potatoes?
 Dad could you pass the green beans?
 Suzie you've hardly touched your steak
 Don't give it to grandma, she's busting her seams.
 The T.V. is shouting the world is not right
 And pooch has decided to snooze
 Under the chair where grandpa
 Has consumed the rest of the booze.
 Junior hadn't time for dinner tonight
 Suzie said with a grin
 Cute Marcia Hallorin's parents are out
 So she said Junior could go in.
 Let's stack up the dishes, not wash them today
 My fingers, they all look like prunes
 Said mother let's all have a good night tonight
 And go to our own separate rooms.

--Donna Greene

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The Return

by Robert Getchell

Retreating from the horizon, the sun has survived another day. Darkness blankets the sky and the moon maintains a watchful eye upon the open land. The war is over, the wounds are healing. Rest, for tomorrow begins a new day...

Listen to the sharp, cutting sounds of the jungle. Feel the sweat on your brow and watch it glisten as it falls in steady drops to the moistened earth. The moon is out tonight. It lights your way as you stir beneath the aim of an enemy. You go quickly here. You step some place where you shouldn't have stepped, you fall asleep from fatigue and some silent stranger will rise up from behind to twist your neck and crush your throat. You don't sleep here.

From my post, I can see a patch of black jungle burning. They must have been on target, for I smell the stench of human flesh in the midnight air. There is no screaming. There seldom is. Sometimes the little ones scream on the way to the ditch. They stare at these foreign devils and question the evil about to befall them, but it doesn't bother you anymore. It's the same in an ambush; you just level your weapon and close their little eyes until your weapon clicks and it's time to reload.

There was a time when it wasn't like this. I would shoot my weapon but I really don't think I could have hit anything. Sometimes my own bullets would kick dust a few yards in front of me. Other times my bullets would bounce off trees or stick in mud, waste deep. I never hit anything because I could never see anything. Seeing the enemy was a decision made entirely by the enemy himself. One thing we saw on our own terms was his continual aftermath. Whole villages would be burnt, occupants included. Arms and legs would be scattered here and there and heads would lie in heaps and each would be missing its ears. The body was discarded like a piece of fat and the ears taken as a token of victory. Yes, our skirmished were met on his terms, deep within the dark green hell of his abode.

The skys are rumbling tonight. Not earthy thunder but manmade. There's a ping, a patter and then lots of pings and patters. It rains red here. It stains you when it falls. I raise my head to the sky and let the rain bring color to my corpse. Those sailing skyships had cut a path across the midnight sky and now it was bleeding down on hell. When the rain ended, I got up to take a leak, calculating my every move to ensure that those peering eyes of the enemy didn't get a chance to hack me into pieces. It should be safe, for even they take leaks...something stirred in the bush and I twisted in hate ready to kill. It was a dog with a broken leg. I reset my gun and walked back to the post. I had taken my leak when I aimed into the bush, to kill the enemy, which turned out to be a dog.

With the passage of the rain, the sky cleared as smoke does from a doused fire. The moon refocused its attention on hell and then faded. The dream was over. I was home?

The City

Streets are jammed with cars.
Sidewalks are a sea
 of three piece suiters
 and high heelers.
Doors of stores
 opening and closing.
Hollers of "Taxi!"
The bells of the chapel
 Strike twelve--
 Lunch!
Restaurants filling.
 the noise of cups and saucers.
On street corners,
Vendors
 selling hotdogs and pretzels,
Children
 pulling at their mothers' skirts--
 "I want that!"
Foreigners
 trying to see the skyscrapers,
 straining their necks
 like giraffes
 reaching for the highest leaf.
At night
the city is still filled with its hustle;
people still yell
 "Taxi!"
 Honk.
The city can make you wish
 you had five pairs of eyes!

--Laura Nystrom

The Bully

by Sandra Watson

There he was waiting; would he let her pass this time? Harriet tried to walk quickly and quietly past the awesome piles of lumber stacked so high, almost to the sky, Harriet thought. Maybe he wouldn't see her. He is so big, ol' Grady Jackson and mean, mean as they come, of that Harriet was sure. She could hardly breathe because of the fear laying so heavy upon her chest, breath coming in short gasps, throat dry, dry like eating soda crackers without milk.

"Stop!" yelled Grady as he jumped off the lumber to block her path. Harriet's legs were too weak to carry her any further. In a squeaky voice she said, "B-b-but I'm late for school, th-the bell's gonna ring." Grady came towards her scowling, "What will you give me if I let you go by?" He reached out and pulled her pigtail. She would gladly offer him anything just for the opportunity of getting beyond that lumber yard and to the sidewalk where she could hear the other children's voices. What do I have to give him, she thought, my lunch so carefully packed by mother or my milk money? That's all she had.

Harriet paused remembering that before leaving home Mama had kissed her and said, "Don't foreget, you aren't alone, God's angels are watching over you." Can't see any angels, maybe one is behind me, she thought. Oh well, guess I'd better believe one is here somewhere.

She took a deep breath, stepped up to Grady and in as loud a voice as she could muster, she said, "You leave me alone, I don't have to give you anything!" Grady leaned back on his heels, hands in his pockets and howled with laughter at this silly little girl daring to defy him. Harriet felt confused. What was happening? Would he let her pass? She stiffened, looking warily around her. Where are all those angels, she wondered. Maybe Grady's angels were blocking her angels. Did the angels get scared too?

Harriet realized he wasn't going to let her pass, and with a burst of energy she pushed him as hard as she could. He was so startled at her reaction that he was temporarily knocked off balance, just long enough to give her the few seconds she needed. She ran as fast as she could, her book bag banging against her side, socks falling down. Would he follow? Breathlessly, she reached the sidewalk, the lumber piles safely behind her. She joined the other children, then had the courage to look back over her shoulder. There he stood, feet apart, yelling.

Max

Your nose stood out
In your warm furry face
Melted crayon eyes
Pleaded for a home.
8 months before you'd go outside.
The stairs were too hard to climb.
At night on the pillow
Curled up and crying
Early morning feedings
And late-night brushings
Having a baby could be no harder.
Still time hasn't changed
The clawing and chewing,
The licks on the nose,
Or the nibbled toes.
But when you sit
With your head in my lap
Or your warm furry body
Suddenly appears under the sheet:
I smile.

--Donna Greene

The Morning After

When a whisper sounds like thunder
You can hear the break of dawn.
When your eyes refuse to focus
Cause your lids feel like they're gone.

When a hundred mighty midgets
Each with rubber headed mallet
Do a job on all accessories
From cranium to pallet.

When your conscious wishes it wasn't
And you think you need a change.
It's just a hefty hangover
That makes you feel so strange.

--Marian Clay

Dad

The picture has faded
But your smile is still there
The warm looking eyes,
And the soft auburn hair.
You're holding me up
On the table's a cake
With one lonely candle
For my first birthday's sake.
They tell me I took
In my small baby fist
A handful of cake
In your face it was squished.
I'm sure that I loved you
When I was with you back then
And I'd love you even more
If I could see you again.

--Donna Greene

A Traveler By Foot

It is mostly in the mornings
That the sun can
And the birds sometimes do
Cause me to forget
And live happily in the morning
Air from then until the evening
When I remember
That I must be going
And that I must set my foot
To places where
I have already been
For a long time

--Alan Habhab

